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(54) **FLEXOGRAPHIC ROTARY PLATEN PRINTING PRESS**

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(21) Appl. No.: **10/662,677**

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**Related U.S. Application Data**

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(51) **Int. Cl.**<sup>7</sup> ..... **B41F 1/34**

(52) **U.S. Cl.** ..... **101/483; 101/182; 101/286; 101/216; 101/327; 101/350.01**

(58) **Field of Search** ..... 101/487, 216, 101/56, 133, 141, 146, 153, 158, 170, 193, 196, 199, 214, 254, 253, 256, 257, 269, 272, 286-287, 288, 339, 327-329, 182, 349.1, 350.1, 350.01, 227, 365, 483; 400/145.2

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A flexographic rotary platen printing press for printing indicia on a web of flexible material moving along a longitudinal axis. The flexographic rotary platen printing press includes a print drum assembly that is affixed to a trolley that is moveable in a linear direction across the web generally transverse to the direction of the web movement. When the web is stopped, the print drum is caused to roll across the web that is sandwiched between the print drum and a flat, planar platen to print indicia onto the web in a line contact. A linear drive system causes the movement of the print drum assembly. The speed of the transverse movement is electronically coordinated to the speed of the rotation of the print drum as it moves across the web to carry out the printing operation. A multi-color printing process is created by serially positioning two or more flexographic presses without the use of a large number of idler rollers or changes of direction in the path of the web as it moves from one flexographic printing press to a subsequent flexographic printing press.

**5 Claims, 4 Drawing Sheets**

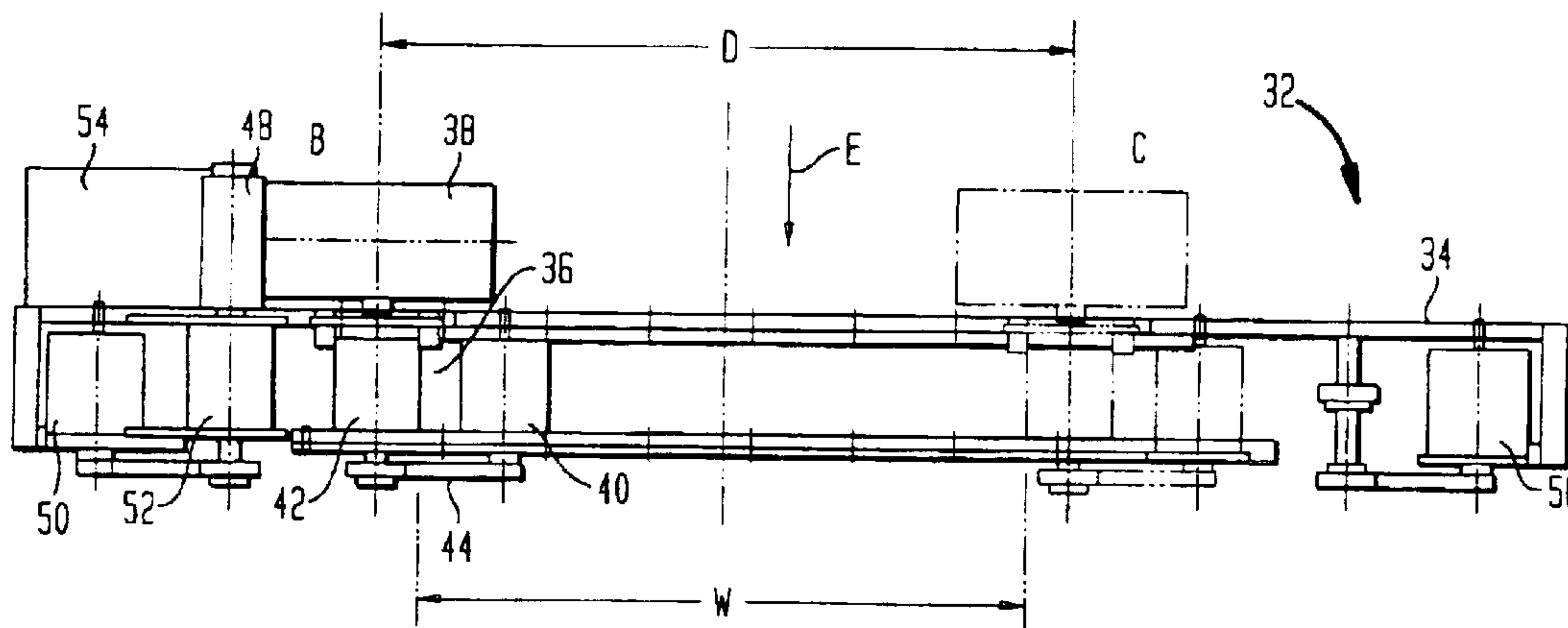


FIG. 1  
(PRIOR ART)

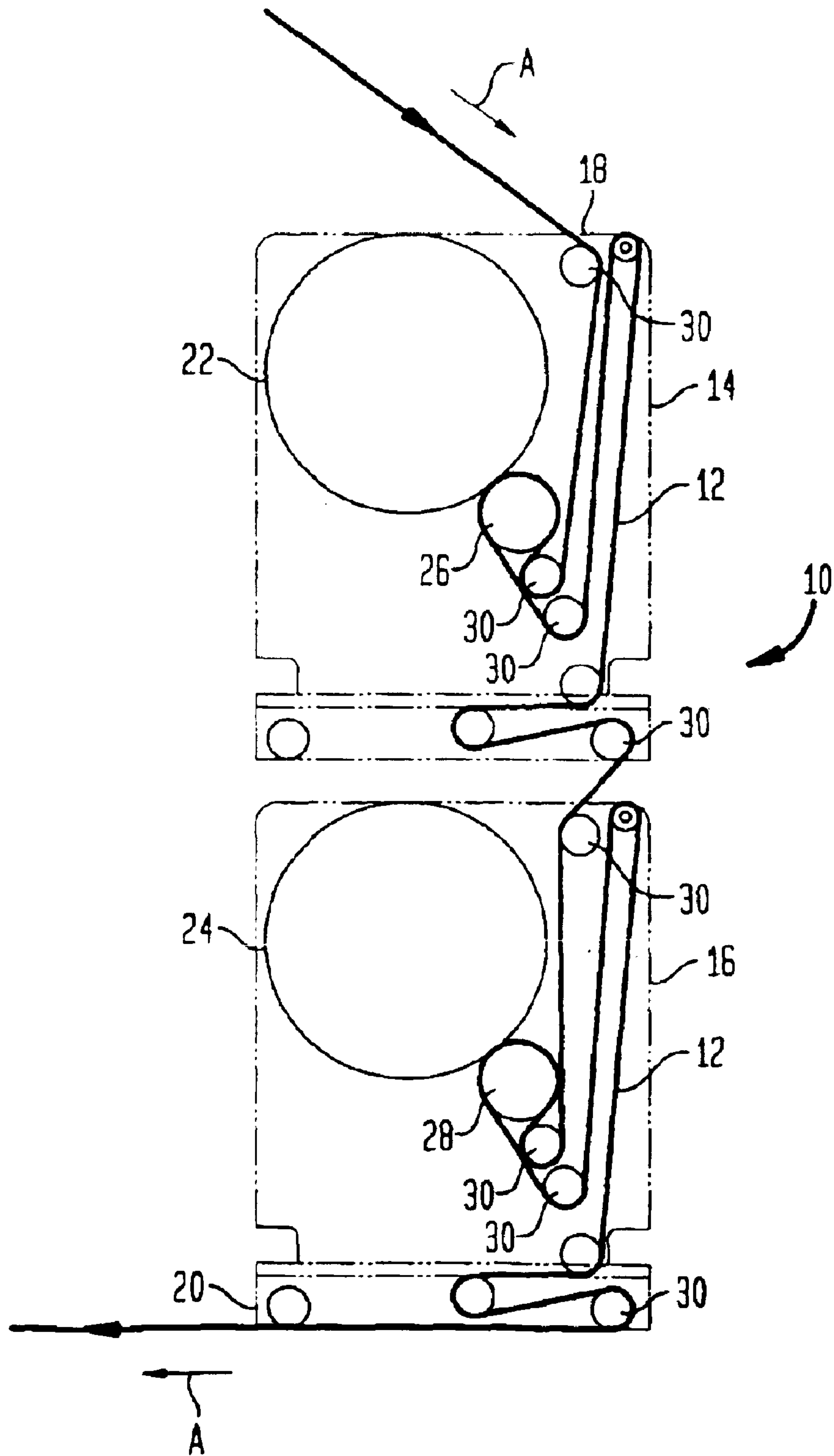


FIG. 2

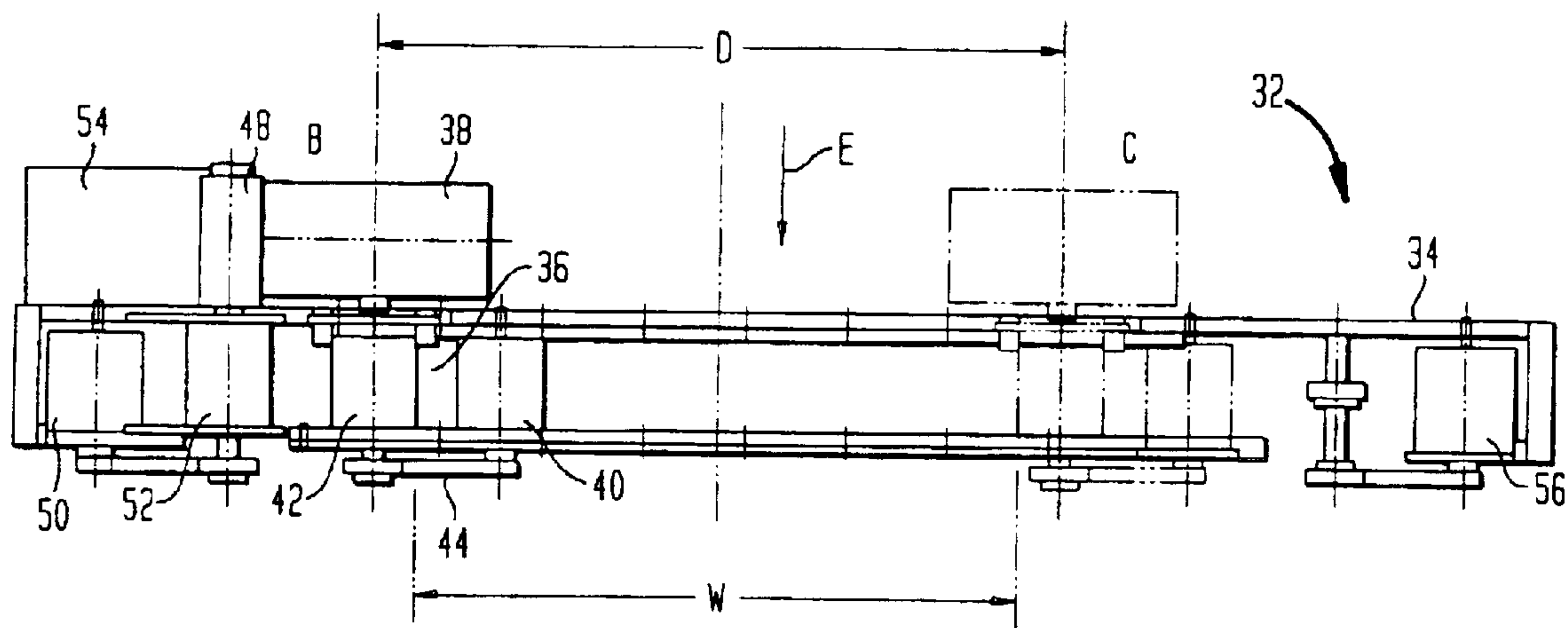


FIG. 3

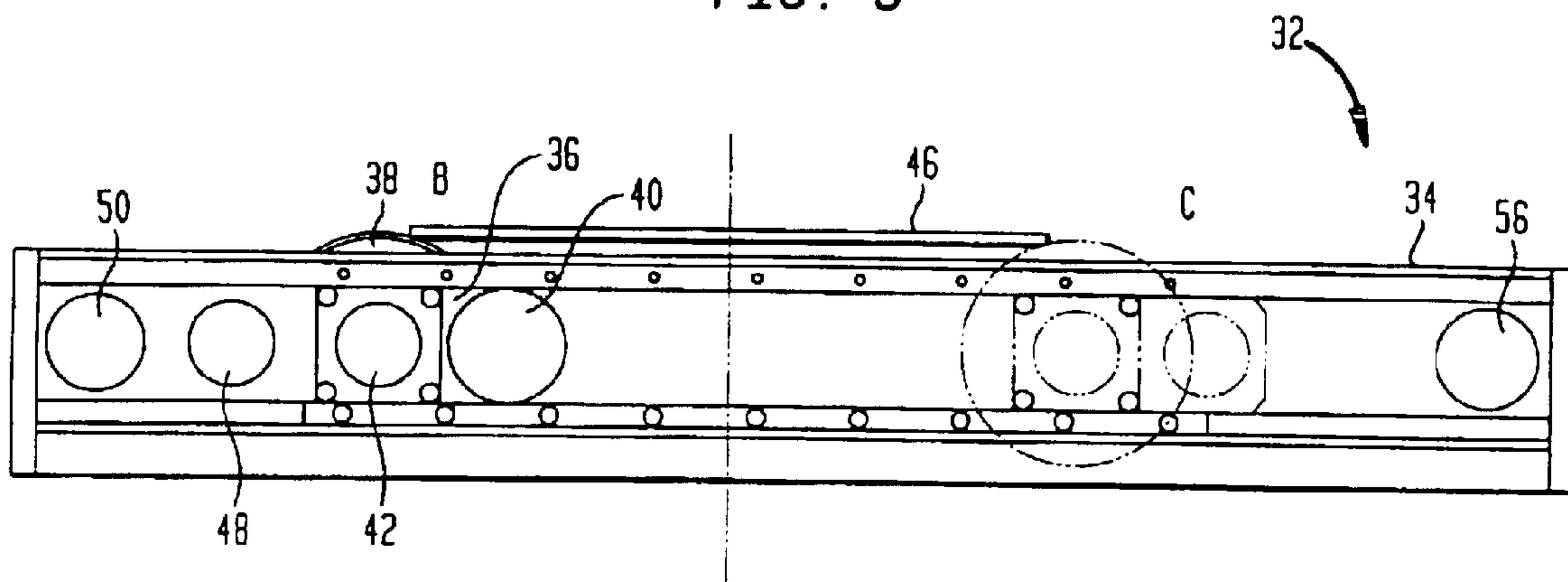


FIG. 4

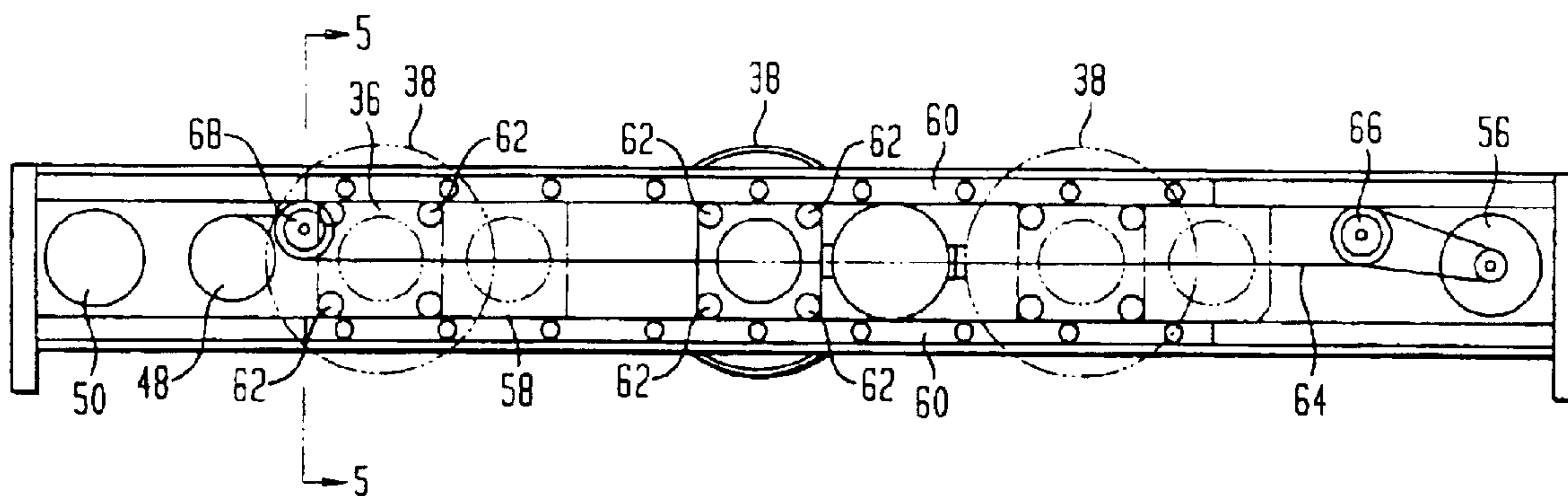


FIG. 5

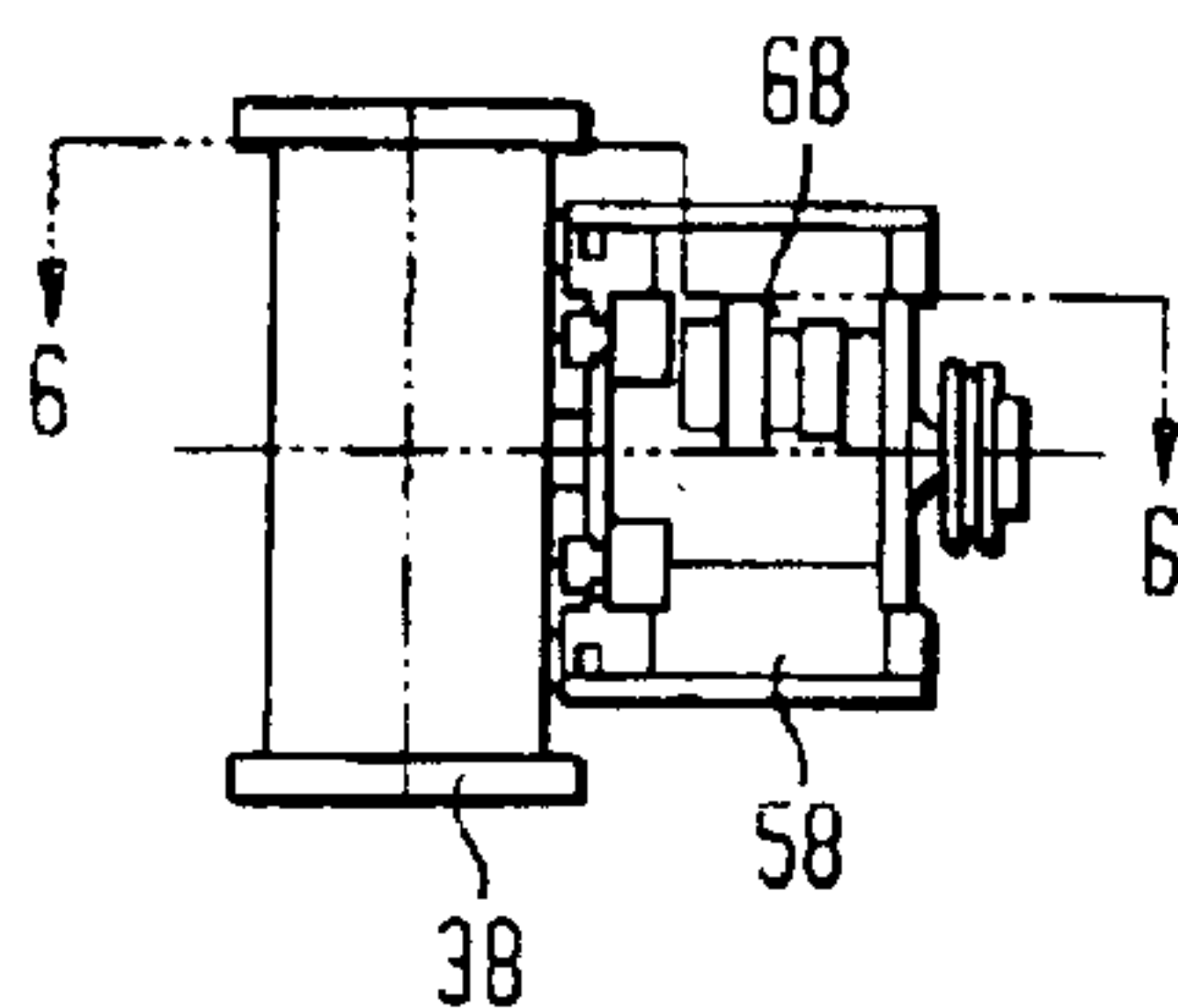


FIG. 6

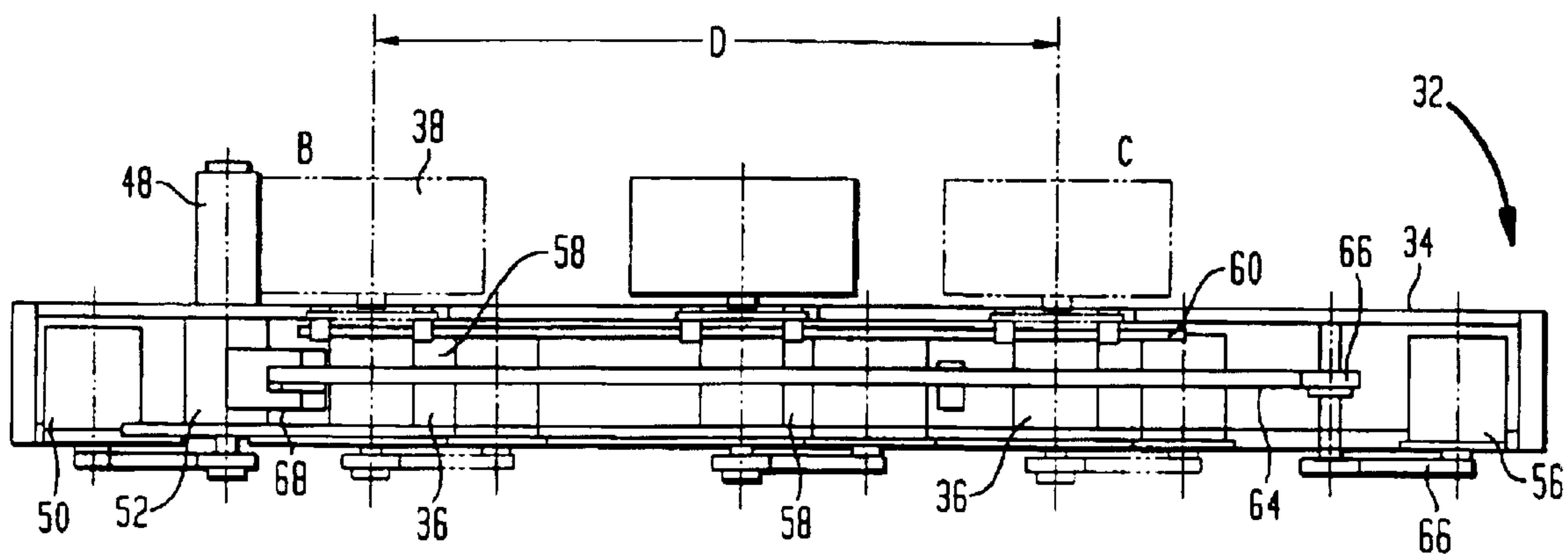
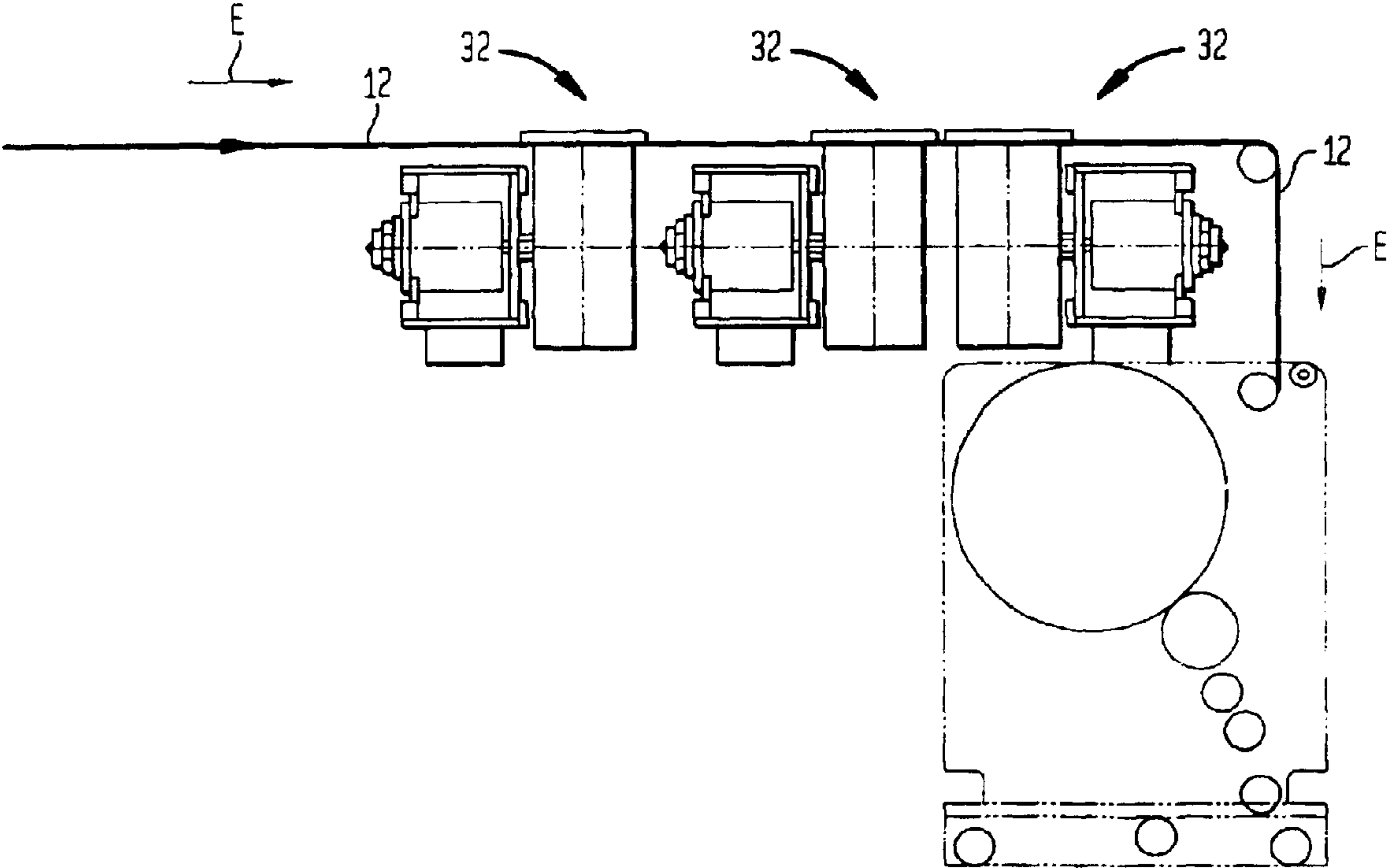


FIG. 7





## FLEXOGRAPHIC ROTARY PLATEN PRINTING PRESS

### RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a divisional of application Ser. No. 09/707,049, filed Nov. 6, 2000, now U.S. Pat. No. 6,644,185, entitled "FLEXOGRAPHIC ROTARY PLATEN PRINTING PRESS."

### BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a flexographic rotary platen printing press utilized for printing indicia onto a flexible web, and, more particularly, to a flexographic rotary platen press having a printing system that makes the printing process easier and with accurate indexing of multiple printing colors.

The use of various printing presses are, of course, well known for their use in providing the printing of a web of flexible material, such as plastic material used in packaging industry for various products. In such systems for printing and in general, the packaging machine, or host machine, actually pulls the web through the print station and that host machine therefore normally provides the movement of the web as well as the registration to insure that the indicia is printed on to the web at the proper location along that web and that each of that indicia is properly spaced along the web.

One typical system currently used for such purpose is the platen press where the web is positioned on the platen and held motionless while a generally planar printing plate is impressed against that portion of the web, sandwiching the web material between the printing plate and the platen. While that Type of system allows good registration of the indicia to be printed onto the web, there is an inherent fault in that it is extremely difficult to maintain an even print over such as large area, that is, the printing plate must be precisely planar and parallel to the plane of the platen or the eventual printed indicia is uneven, and exhibits a non-uniform pattern.

Another current system is with the use of a flexographic press where the web is continually in motion and is moved along its longitudinal axis by the various mechanisms of the host machine. In that system, there is a rotary print drum that is rotated and the web is moved intermediate that rotating printing drum and a round impression roller as opposed to the flat platen of the previous platen press. The cylindrical rotary print drum has the desired indicia on a printing plate located on the external peripheral surface of that printing drum and rotates in the same direction as the web. An inking system is used to apply the ink to the printing roller and that inking system is well known and uses a anilox roller to apply the ink to the particular indicia on the print drum.

Again, however, the aforescribed system has certain limitations as the moving web must be carefully aligned with the platen and the printing roller and thus is carried through a large number of idler rollers that guide the web to the proper position for printing, including an impression roller that requires the web to form a complete S configuration for correct alignment, registration and for providing the proper tension at all times on the moving web.

Thus, with the moving web type of printing press, the system requires a large number of tensioning and idler rollers to hold the web in the correct alignment and to create the proper tension in the web as it moves in a serpentine fashion through the flexographic printing press. Each roller,

therefore, changes the direction of the web as it is moving through the printing press and each roller and change of direction also induces a stress on the web and can cause a stretching of the web and result in the final printed indicia being blurred. Accordingly, while the use of a multiplicity of tensioning and other rollers is necessary in the operation of the aforescribed press to carry out printing on the fly, there is also a downside, that is, while the rollers are essential in the overall control of the web tension and control of the web orientation, the use of so many rollers generally creates many changes in direction of the web and also introduces stresses in the web that are undesirable.

The problem is aggravated with the use of multicolor printing where different colors are used since those different colors are printed on to the web serially, that is, after the printing of one color on to the web, the web, still moving at a high speed, progresses to a further printing cycle where the next color is applied to the web and so on. Obviously then, with a multi color printing, there are two, three or additional sets of rollers through which the web must travel and, again, each additional set of rollers can cause stress, stretch the web and make the registration of the subsequent colors extremely difficult. Too, with the multiple color printing presses, there is no room to insert dryers intermediate the color printing steps and thus the system is limited to materials having some porosity of the web material to allow the ink to dry before passing through a later printing stage with a different color. Accordingly, the use of such a multi-color rotating drum printing press is inappropriate for the other non-porous materials of webs, such as polyethylene, nylon, or polypropylene.

Thus, it would be advantageous to provide a flexographic printing press that can print the desired indicia upon a web without an excess of tensioning rollers or S-bends, be able to be used on non-porous materials and yet achieve a good printing quality and accuracy of the position and registry of the printed material.

### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides an improved flexographic rotary platen printing press and system used by that printing press to print indicia upon a web. With the present printing system, there is provided a system that operates in conjunction with a host machine that advances or moves the web in an intermittent manner, that is, the host machine preferably advances the web along its longitudinal axis and stops the web at predetermined intervals where the actual printing of the web is carried out. The overall movement of the web itself can be carried out by a conventional means including a D.C. or stepper motor in the host machine and controlled to move and stop the progress of the web at a precise location where it is desired to place the printed indicia. Alternatively, the present flexographic rotary platen printing system can be used with some independent moving system that can control the movement of the web and not necessarily be a part of a host machine that is carrying out some other operation on the web material.

With the present invention, however, as will be seen, the actual speed of the advancement of the web is not critical and need not be subject to any particularly precise electronic control since that speed does not need to be coordinated with the speed of any print drum; only the position of the web in the stopped position is of importance.

Thus, the web is stopped in the precise desired position and a print drum, having the print plate carried thereon, is activated and moves transversely across the web as the print



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drum also rotates. As the print drum moves along the transverse direction, the web is sandwiched between the print drum and a flat platen, such that the printing of the web takes place. When the print drum reaches the end of its travel across the width of the web, the printing is completed and the print drum is returned to its original location to be ready for a subsequent cycle.

As is known, the inking process can also be carried out by conventional inking systems including the use of an anilox roller and the inking system may utilize a closed doctor blade type utilizing a laser engraved ceramic coated anilox roller mounted in a stationary position off to the side of the web and fed with ink by an inverted bottle cartridge of pigmented ink. In the inking system, the anilox roller is driven, preferably by a stepper motor, and that stepper motor is coordinated with a stepper motor that drives the print drum during the inking process such that the two motors are synchronized electronically to assure that the surface speeds of the anilox roller and the print plate on the print drum match without the need to link the two motors or drives together with gears. As will be noted, the various rotating motive means will be described herein with the preferred means, that is by use of stepper motors, however, it will be seen that other motive means, including servo motors, could be used in carrying out the present invention and still be within the inventive concept. Of importance, however, is that with the use of speed controllable motors, the coordination of the speeds between the anilox roller and the print drum can be carried out electronically and thus, without the need for any gearing system to provide that coordination of such speeds.

Thus, the print drum is also driven by a stepper motor and the motor speed can be controlled as the print drum moves transversely across the web in carrying out the printing process. A further stepper motor operates the linear drive system utilized to move the print drum in the transverse direction and that linear drive system can comprise mounting the print drum, its bearing housing and its stepper motor on a trolley that slides along a pair of rails. A belt or sprocketed chain can connect the linear drive motor to the trolley and by operation of the linear drive motor, the trolley carrying the print drum, the print motor and the print drum bearing housing bi-directionally transverse to the movement of the web, when in motion.

Taking, therefore, a complete cycle for a single color print, the print drum will make one complete revolution to rotate the print plate against the anilox roller to ink the print plate. At this step, the stepper motor rotating the anilox roller and the stepper motor rotating the print drum are electronically controlled to match the speed of the anilox roller with that of the print plate. Once inked, the print drum will disengage from the ink system and move transversely across the web while simultaneously being rotated by its stepper motor.

At this step, the speed of the rotation of the print drum is controlled to be coordinated with the linear speed of the print drum as it moves transversely across the web to print the desired indicia on the web at a precise registration. The web, being sandwiched between the print drum and a flat platen, is therefore at a standstill and the printing process can be carried out accurately and the contact between the printing plate and the flat platen is a line contact. The print drum continues its progress, moved by the linear drive motor, from the first or home position fully across the web to a remote position past the web where its motion is terminated and printing has been accomplished. Upon that completion of the print step, the print drum will lift away from the platen

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and return to the home position juxtaposed to the inking system ready to carry out the process again.

As such, the entire process for a print cycle can be carried out by means of three stepper motors; an anilox motor to rotate the anilox roller, a linear drive motor to move the print drum in a linear path across the web and a print drum motor that rotates the print drum. All coordination of the motors can be readily be accomplished electronically by a micro-processor based system.

Other features of the present flexographic rotary platen printing press will become apparent in light of the following detailed description of a preferred embodiment thereof and as illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

#### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a schematic of a multi-color flexographic printing press constructed accordance with the present known state of the art,

FIG. 2 is a top, plan view of the flexographic rotary platen printing press constructed in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. 3 is a side view of the printing press of FIG. 2;

FIG. 4 is a front view of the flexographic rotary platen printing press of the present invention and showing, in more detail, the linear traversing mechanism used to carry out printing process;

FIG. 5 is an end cross-sectional view of the printing press taken along the line 5—5 of FIG. 4 and illustrating the linear drive system; and

FIG. 6 is a top, cross sectional view of the present invention taken along the line 6—6 of FIG. 5; and

FIG. 7 is an end view of a plurality of printing presses of the present invention operative to print multi-colors onto a web.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Referring now to FIG. 1, there is shown a schematic view of a typical prior art flexographic printing press system 10 currently used to carry out the printing of multi-colors onto a web 12 of flexible material. As can be seen, in order to print more than one color, the flexographic printing press system 10, of necessity, requires, basically, separate printing presses that is, there is a first printing press 14 for printing indicia of one color onto the web 12 and a second printing press 16 to print the second color onto that web 12. Obviously, while the FIG. 1 illustrates a printing system 10 utilizing two colors, there may be additional colors that can be printed on to the web 12 with the consequent equal number of additional printing presses that print those additional colors onto the web 12.

In FIG. 1, however, it can be seen that the web 12 progresses through a serpentine path as it passes from the entrance 18 to the first printing press 14 to the exit 20 of the second printing press 16 traveling in the direction of the arrows A. In particular, each of the first and second printing presses 14, 16 include, respectively a first printing drum 22 and a second printing drum 24 where the indicia is formed on the exterior surface of the first and second drums 22, 24, generally by means of printing plates that are, of course, inked by conventional inking systems (not shown) to apply the differing colors of ink to that exterior surface.

Also, first and second impression rollers 26, 28 are located so as to be in abutment to the first and second print



drums **22, 24** to assure the proper contact between the web **12** and the print drums **14, 16** in carrying out the transfer of the ink to the web **12**. As is conventional, in order to achieve the proper contact between the web **12** and the print drums **22, 24**, the web basically forms an S configuration as it passes around the first and second impression rollers **26, 28**. As also can be seen, there are considerable additional idler rollers, **30**, that, in general, direct the web **12** into the proper registration and engagement with the first and second printing drums **22, 24** to create the proper, desired tension of that web **12** as well as the pressure of the contact between the first and second impression rollers **26, 28** and the first and second print drums **22, 24**.

As stated, however, each turn or twist of the web **12** travelling over a roller can cause stresses to be created in the web **12** and potentially cause a stretching of the web **12** and a consequent misalignment of the printed indicia or a blurring effect of the printed indicia due to that stretching and relaxing of the flexible material of the web **12**. Accordingly it would be advantageous to provide a printing press system where multiple colors can be imprinted on to the flexible web while avoiding, as much as possible, the stretching caused by the multiple rollers, that is, to keep the number of idler and other rollers down to a minimum. It should be noted, that while the FIG. **1** printing system is believed to be typical of the number of the various rollers used in a conventional, prior art multi-color printing system and is submitted to be fairly representative, there may be basically more or less rollers user in any particular commercial multi-color printing press. The illustrative FIG. **1** is to indicate that there are a large number of such rollers that are current used in a typical current multi-color printing system.

As a further drawback of the present prior art multi-color flexographic printing system as shown in FIG. **1**, it can also be seen the each of the first and second printing presses **14, 16** are aligned together in close proximity to each other as the web is moved serially from the first printing press **14** to the second printing press **16**. As such, the lack of available space between the first printing press **14** and the second printing press or presses **16** leaves no room for a dryer to be located intermediate those printing presses or, for that matter, between any subsequent printing presses where additional colors are utilized. Thus, there is insufficient time for the indicia printed on to the web **12** to dry from one printing press to another.

Since it is important for the printed indicia to dry before passing through a subsequent printing press, the printing press system of FIG. **1** is basically limited to web materials where the drying process can take place in as rapid an amount of time as possible and thus, the printing press system **10** of FIG. **1** is not suitable for the use of non-porous web materials such as polyethylene, nylon, or polypropylene or the like and is a limitation on the use of that printing press system.

Turning now to FIGS. **2** and **3**, there are shown, respectively, a plan view and a front view of a flexographic rotary platen printing press **32** constructed in accordance with the present invention. As can be seen, the basic flexographic rotary platen printing press **32** comprises a frame **34** upon which the apparatus is constructed. The frame **34** may be any variety of structural members that are assembled together to hold the various components and the apparatus to be hereinafter described and can generally be constructed of steel frame members welded, riveted or bolted together.

The flexographic rotary platen printing press **32** comprises a print drum assembly **36** that includes a print drum

**38** and the various components necessary to enable that print drum **38** to be rotated as will later be explained. The print drum assembly **36** thus also includes a print drum motor **40** and a print drum bearing housing **42** that contains and includes the associated gearing to enable the print drum motor **40** to rotate the print drum **38**. A belt **44** may be utilized to convey the rotational movement of the print drum motor **40** to the print drum bearing housing **42** and thus to the print drum **38** itself. The indicia to be printed on to the web **12** is normally provided on a cylindrical printing plate that is affixed to the external annular surface of the print drum **38**.

As indicated, the print drum motor **40** is preferably a stepper motor or so as to have good control of the rotational movement provided to the print drum **38**, however the print drum motor **40** may be a D.C. servo motor or other device that can be fairly precisely controlled with respect to its speed and angular position.

In FIGS. **2** and **3**, the print drum assembly **36** is shown in two positions, a first or starting position indicated by the solid line depiction of the print drum assembly, labeled B and a second or ending position showing the print drum assembly **36** in the dotted line depiction and labeled C. As will become clear, the print drum assembly **36** is movable between position B and C to effect the printing process.

As also shown in FIG. **1**, the centerline of the print drum **38** moves a distance D as it traverses from its first position at B to its second position at C. As that print drum assembly **36** moves between points B and C, the print drum assembly **36** traverses across the web **12** that is located as shown and which has a width W. The web travels in the direction of the arrows E. As previously indicated, the positioning and movement of the web **12** is normally effected by the host machine, not shown, in a conventional manner where the web **12** is used for some packaging process carried out by that host machine. Accordingly, that host machine pulls the web **12** through the flexographic printing press **32** in carrying out the present invention and the host machine also provides the necessary controller and associated components to periodically stop the movement of the web **12** as will be explained. Alternately, however, the present flexographic printing press **32** can have its own means to cause the web **12** to travel as shown in the direction E and to stop at predetermined intermediate positions at precisely registered locations where the printing process can take place.

The web **12**, itself, travels in the direction of the arrows E and, as shown in FIG. **3**, there is a flat, planar platen **46** positioned so as to sandwich the web **12** between the platen **46** and the print drum **38**. Thus, as can be seen in that Figure, as the print drum **38** moves between the position at B to the position at C, the print drum **38** rolls across the undersurface of the web **12** so as to transfer the indicia from the print drum **38** to the web **12**, and there is a line contact between the print drum **38** and the web **12** backed up by the flat, planar platen **46**. Since the distance D, that is, the distance traveled by the print drum **38** is slightly longer than the width W of the web **12**, it can be seen that the line contact between the print drum **38** and the web **12** continues fully across the web **12** to carry out the printing process of the indicia on to the full width of the web **12** and that the print drum **38** continues a slight distance beyond the outer edges of the web **12** and discontinues contact with the web **12**.

An inking system is also used to deposit ink on to the printing plate that is affixed onto the external surface of the print drum **38**. That inking system may be a conventional system used with flexographic printing presses and includes



an anilox roller **48** that contacts the exterior surface of the print drum **38** when the print drum assembly **36** is in that first or starting position at position B. The anilox roller **48** is rotated by means of a anilox motor **50** via an anilox bearing housing **52**. As is also conventional, the anilox motor **50** is coordinated in its speed with the speed of the print drum motor **40** so that the surfaces of the anilox roller **48** and print drum **38** are moving at the same speed as they are in contact with each other in depositing the uniform layer of ink onto the indicia to be printed onto the web **12**, however, where the conventional speed coordination is carried out by a mechanical gearing system, the present invention includes the use of speed controlled motors, such as stepper or servo motors that allow the coordination to be carried out electronically by means of a microprocessor and without the need for a mechanical gearing system. The ink for the anilox roller **48** can be supplied by a conventional ink supply **54**.

Thus, in carrying out the printing of the web **12**, as the web **12** is progressed along the longitudinal axis as indicated by the arrow E, the print drum assembly **36**, including the print drum **38**, travels linearly, generally transverse to that axis of travel of the web **12**, and preferable moves in a linear direction along an axis that is 90 degrees displaced from the axis of the movement of the web **12**. The actual linear movement of the print drum assembly **36** takes place, of course, when the web **12** has ceased movement.

Turning now to FIGS. 4-6, there is shown, respectively, a front view of the present flexographic printing press **10**, an end cross sectional view taken along the lines 5-5 of FIG. 4, and an top cross sectional view taken along the lines 6-6 of FIG. 5. In these Figures, the linear drive system is shown that moves the print drum assembly **36** linearly across the web **12** (FIGS. 2-3) in a direction transverse to the normal direction of movement or travel of the web **12**. Although the linear drive system to be hereafter explained is the preferred system, it will be seen that any number of alternative systems could be employed to carry out the linear movement of the print drum assembly **36**.

The linear drive system comprises a linear drive motor **56** that is rotatable at a controllable speed and, again, a suitable motor for such purpose is a stepper motor, although other motors, such as a servo motor, could be employed as long as the motor speed can be controlled. The print drum assembly **36** is basically carried by a trolley **58** that can move in the desired transverse direction to the movement of the web **12**. Trolley **58** can move along two rails **60** that provide support for the trolley **58** and the trolley itself can be affixed to be supported by and move along those rails **60** by a plurality of rollers **62** having V-shaped outer configuration that fit onto the rails **60**. As such, the trolley **58**, along with the entire print drum assembly can easily ride along a linear path that is generally transverse to the axis of the movement of the web **12**.

Further making up the linear drive system, there is a flexible belt **64** that is affixed to a sprocket **66** on the linear drive motor **56** and which flexible belt **64** is also affixed to a idler sprocket **68** at the far end of the rails **60** remote from the linear drive motor **56**. The flexible belt **64** is also affixed to the trolley **58** such that by rotating or activation of the linear drive motor **56**, the flexible belt **64** can move to displace the trolley **58** along its linear path. Accordingly by activating the linear drive motor **56**, the trolley **56** carrying the print drive assembly **36** can be moved along the linear path in both directions generally transverse to the movement of the web **12**.

It should be noted, as a feature of the present invention, that the print drum **38** progress along the linear path across

the web **12** to carry out the printing of indicia on that web **12**, the speed of the transverse linear motion is coordinated with the speed of the rotation of the print drum **38** to lay the printing indicia down onto the web **12** without smearing. In the preferred embodiment, that coordination can be carried out by the use of stepper motors for both the linear drive motor **56** and the print drum motor **40** and both motor speeds controlled by a microprocessor. Alternatively, of course, servo motors could be used or other rotative devices that can be electronically controlled with respect to their speed. Thus, as can be seen, all of the motor speeds, including the print drum motor **40**, the anilox motor **50** and the linear drive motor **56** are all speed controllable and all can be coordinated by means of an electronic function utilizing a microprocessor.

With the foregoing apparatus, the method of carrying out the printing of indicia onto the web **12** can now be readily explained by reference to FIGS. 2-6. The web **12** is caused to move along a longitudinal axis generally in the direction of the arrow E. That movement is conventionally carried out by a host machine that provides some further function on the printed web such as a packaging machine and the host packaging machine is programmed to pull web through the flexographic printing press **32** as well as to start and stop the movement of the web **12** at predetermined times and registry locations. All of such control of the web movement is generally standard in the industry, however, as an alternative, the conventional equipment used to carry out such movement and the coordination of the starting and stopping of the web and the registry of the web in a predetermined position may be provided by dedicated or stand alone equipment provided along with the flexographic printing press and not depend upon that function by the host machine.

In any event, while in the position B, the print drum **38**, having the printing plate affixed thereto, is inked by a coordination of the anilox roller **48** rotating in synchronous motion with the print drum **38** to apply the proper amount of ink to the indicia formed on the printing plate. The movement of the web **12** along a longitudinal axis E is halted such that the web **12** is motionless and in proper registry as determined by the host machine or other apparatus. The linear drive motor **56** is activated to move the flexible belt **64** to thus move the trolley **58** carrying the print drum assembly **36** across the web **12** in a direction generally transverse to the direction of the normal web movement.

As the print drum assembly **36** moves linearly in the transverse direction, the print drum motor **40** rotates the print drum **38** at a speed coordinated with the linear motion of the print drum **38** to lay down the printed indicia onto the web **12**. When the print drum **38** has concluded its linear travel, and the print drum assembly **36** is at the location C, the printing of the indicia has been completed and the linear drive system can be utilized to return the print drum assembly **36** back to the position B or the starting position to be ready for the next printing progression. Thus, the host machine can commence the movement of the web **12** in the longitudinal axis in the direction of the arrows E to reposition and re-register the web **12** for the next printing cycle.

In FIG. 7, there is shown an end view of a plurality of flexographic printing presses **32** constructed in accordance with the present invention. As shown, the plurality of flexographic printing presses **32** are located serially and close to each other such that the web **12** can travel from one flexographic printing press **32** to a subsequent flexographic printing press **32** without the need for idler rollers or any change of direction. Instead, the web **12** can travel in a



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generally straight line direction such that the introduction of stress is minimized and yet, each different flexographic printing press **32** can lay down a different color accurately and with precise registration.

It will be understood that the scope of the invention is not limited to the particular embodiment disclosed herein, by way of example, but only by the scope of the appended claims.

We claim:

**1.** A method for printing indicia on to a flexible web, said method comprising the steps of:

- a) positioning a printable web material for movement and periodic stopping along a longitudinal axis;
- b) providing a print drum having indicia formed thereon;
- c) applying ink to the indicia formed on the print drum;
- d) moving the print drum generally transverse to the longitudinal axis while rotating the print drum when the printable web material is at a stopped condition to cause the print drum to roll along the surface of the printable web material in a line contact therewith to transfer indicia from the print drum to the flexible web; and

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e) electronically coordinating the transverse movement of the print drum with the speed of rotation of the print drum.

**2.** A method for printing indicia on to a flexible web as defined in claim **1** wherein said method further comprises the steps of providing a generally planar platen and sandwiching said web intermediate said print drum and said platen.

**3.** A method for printing indicia on to a flexible web as defined in claim **2** wherein said step of applying ink to said print drum comprises providing an anilox roller having ink deposited thereon and contacting said anilox roller with said print drum while simultaneously rotating said anilox roller and said print drum.

**4.** A method for printing indicia on to a flexible web as defined in claim **2** wherein said method comprise carrying out steps a) to e) sequentially.

**5.** A method for printing indicia on to a flexible web as defined in claim **4** wherein said step of applying ink to said indicial formed on said print drum comprises applying a different color of ink to each of said sequentially carried out steps a) to e).

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